DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 937 SP 039 173

AUTHOR Marrin, Mary; Grant, Linda R.; Adamson, Gary; Craig, Allan; Squire, Frances A.

TITLE The Privilege of Professionalism. Ontario College of Teachers.

INSTITUTION Ontario College of Teachers, Toronto.

PUB DATE 1999-01-00

NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Conference on New Professionalism in Teaching (Hong Kong, January 15-17, 1999).

AVAILABLE FROM Ontario College of Teachers, 121 Bloor Street East, 6th Floor, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3M5, Canada. Tel: 416-961-8800; Tel: 888-534-2222 (Toll Free); Fax: 416-961-8822.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Politics of Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *State Standards; *Teacher Certification; Teacher Improvement

IDENTIFIERS *Ontario; *Professionalism

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an introduction to the mandate of the Standards of Practice and Education Unit of the Ontario College of Teachers and describes how the College is proceeding to address several challenging tasks. The tasks include the licensing of teachers trained in Ontario or other jurisdictions, disciplinary procedures, and in the Professional Affairs Department, the development of standards of practice for the profession, ethical standards, a framework for ongoing professional learning, and the registration of program providers and accreditation of programs of teacher preservice and inservice training. The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1996 to license, govern, and regulate the practice of teaching. This report explores whether the creation of the College has enhanced the professionalism of teachers. It looks at the political context within which it was developed, the works of the College's various departments, and new professionalism in teaching. It concludes with a discussion of the privilege of professionalism. (Contains 14 references.) (SM)

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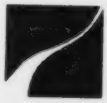

Ontario College of Teachers
Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario

Ontario College of Teachers: The Privilege of Professionalism

Mary Marrin, Linda R. Grant, Gary Adamson,
Allan Craig and Frances A. Squire

Paper presented at the
International Conference on New Professionalism in Teaching:
Teacher Education and Teacher Development in a Changing World
Hong Kong
January 15-17, 1999

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The Ontario College of Teachers:

The Privilege of Professionalism

MARY MARRIN, LINDA R. GRANT, GARY ADAMSON, ALLAN CRAIG, and FRANCES A. SQUIRE

OVERVIEW OF PAPER

The Ontario College of Teachers was established as a self-regulatory professional body in 1996, with authority to license, govern and regulate the practice of teaching in Ontario. This paper is a collaborative endeavour by members of the Standards of Practice and Education Unit of the Professional Affairs Department of the Ontario College of Teachers.

In this paper we provide an introduction to the mandate of the Standards of Practice and Education Unit of the Ontario College of Teachers and describe how we are proceeding to address several challenging tasks. These tasks include the licensing of teachers trained in Ontario or in other jurisdictions, disciplinary procedures, and in the Professional Affairs Department, the development of standards of practice for the profession, ethical standards, a framework for ongoing professional learning, and the registration of program providers and accreditation of programs of teacher pre-service and in-service training.

Does the establishment of structures similar to those in place for doctors and dentists, for lawyers and for engineers liken the status of teachers to that of these other "professions"? Can a

body established for the purposes of public accountability heighten the professionalism of its members? Is "professional" a status that can be bestowed by legislation?

The Privilege of Professionalism is the title of the 1995 final report of the Implementation Committee of the Ontario College of Teachers. Has the creation of the College enhanced the professionalism of teachers? This is the question we are exploring as we approach the second anniversary of the inauguration of the first Governing Council of the Ontario College of Teachers.

EVOLUTION OF THE COLLEGE

The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1996 to license, govern and regulate – in the public interest – the practice of teaching. Ontario is the second province in Canada to establish a self-regulatory body for the teaching profession. The College brings to the teaching profession full professional recognition and status. The 171,500 members of the College include classroom teachers in publicly-funded and private schools, school administrators, superintendents, as well as Ministry of Education and Training staff, faculty of education and community college staff with Ontario teacher qualifications and many others, including staff at the Ontario College of Teachers, who hold qualifications to teach in Ontario. Anyone who is employed in a publicly-funded system and requires a teaching certificate to be in that position must be a member in good standing of the College. People who work in other fields such as health care and business and have teacher qualifications may also choose to join the College in order to ensure their qualifications remain in good standing. "Teacher" is defined in the *Education Act* as a member of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The Privilege of Professionalism, the final report of the Implementation Committee of the Ontario College of Teachers, a committee established by the Government of Ontario, provides a summary description of the evolution of the College.

> Fifty years of discussion and debate about teachers in Ontario having a self-regulatory profession paved the way for the Ontario College of Teachers Act. Since the 1950 *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario* (the Hope Commission), there have been no fewer than 10 reports to the Ministry of Education and Training about teacher education and standards for the profession. The 1968 report of the Hall-Dennis Commission, *Living and Learning*, first proposed a college of teachers. Between 1979 and 1983 there was an attempt to create a college, but the discussion between the provincial government and the teachers' federations did not reach a conclusion. Subsequent reports delivered in 1987, *Teacher Education in Ontario: Current Practice and Options for the Future*, and 1988, *Final Report of the Teacher Education Review Steering Committee*, also recommended the creation of a self-regulatory body. More recent studies, which focused on teacher education and explored future directions for education in Ontario, reflect a common theme: there is an urgent need for reform in many areas, including pre-service and in-service education, that is, professional learning, for teachers.

The Teacher Education Council (TECO) appointed by the provincial government between 1989 and 1993, consulted and reported on many of these key areas of

> concern. The theme of "collaboration" runs through many of TECO's recommendations. Most importantly, TECO clearly identified the need for a self-regulatory professional body, underscored the importance of professional learning, and supported the relatively new concept of career-long learning. In addition, the majority of TECO's recommendations were supported by teachers' organizations across the province. (1995:5)

In February 1995, the report of the Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL), *For the Love of Learning*, recommended that the Ontario College of Teachers be established.

> We recommend that a professional, self regulatory body for teaching, the Ontario College of Teachers, be established, with powers, duties and membership of the college set out in legislation. The college should be responsible for determining professional standards, certification, and accreditation of teacher education programs. Professional educators should form a majority of the membership of the college, with substantial representation of non-educators from the community at large. (Recommendation 58)

The Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 was passed into law with the support of the three political parties in Ontario. The first meeting of the 31-member Governing Council was held in May 1997. Members of the Council include 17 persons who are members of the teaching profession in Ontario and are elected by the College membership. In the first election 437 candidates sought an elected position on the Council. The remaining 14 Council members are

appointed as public members by the Ontario government and bring a wide variety of experiences to their responsibilities. Council members are elected or appointed for a three-year term.

The Ontario government has delegated authority to regulate the teaching profession to the Ontario College of Teachers. The College now sets membership criteria, enrols members and creates a register of qualified teachers. It issues, renews, amends, suspends, cancels, revokes, and reinstates teaching certificates. It accredits pre-service and in-service teacher education programs and registers program providers. The College receives and investigates complaints and deals with discipline and fitness to practise issues. The College is funded entirely by the membership.

Eleven committees assist the Governing Council in its work. All members of these committees are also members of the Council. The responsibilities and structure of each committee are outlined in legislation. The five Statutory Committees are specifically named in the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*. The four Standing Committees and two Special Committees were established by Council to carry out the ongoing work of Council. This chart illustrates the structure of the Council and statutory, standing and special committees.

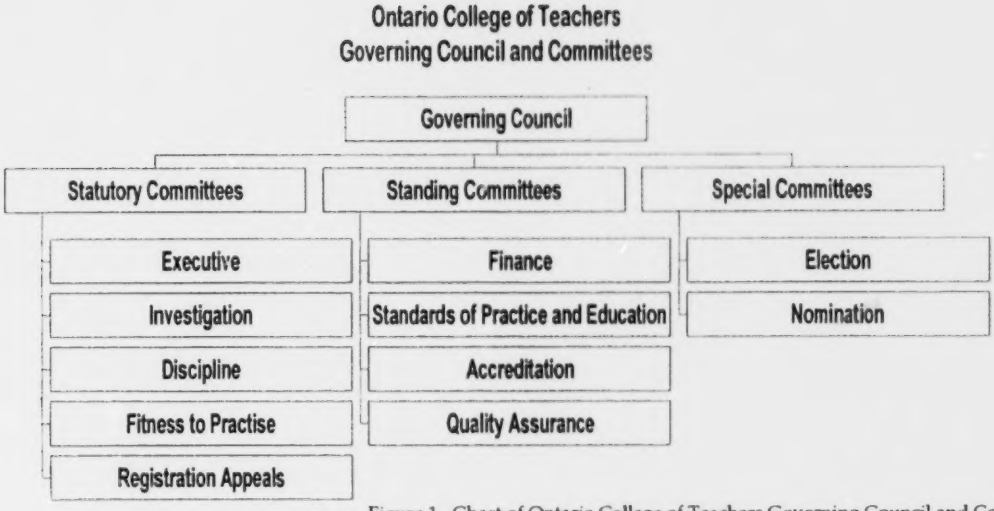

Figure 1. Chart of Ontario College of Teachers Governing Council and Committees

The Political Context

The College was an unfamiliar concept for most Ontario educators. As a still new organization, the Ontario College of Teachers continues in the process of bringing meaning to a legislated mandate. As this reality continues to emerge, it means strengthening working relationships with previously existing organizations such as the Ministry of Education and Training, teacher federations, faculties of education, and the media.

The College and the Ministry of Education and Training

The relationship between the College and the Ministry of Education and Training continues to evolve as the ability of the College to fulfil its mandate increases. The regulation governing the qualifications of teachers had been a regulation under the *Education Act* and the responsibility of

the Ministry of Education and Training before transfer to the College under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*. In the fall of 1997, only months after the inauguration of the College, the Government of Ontario introduced Bill 160, legislation which proposed radical changes to the Ontario education system. One of the proposed changes would have provided for unqualified teachers to be placed in some Ontario classrooms. The College, as the regulatory body for the teaching profession, took a very strong stand in opposition to the inclusion of these clauses in the proposed legislation. The Chair of the Governing Council spoke passionately before the three-party hearings about the need to have qualified teachers in all Ontario classrooms. The Governing Council position was clearly articulated in a written submission to the government. Ultimately, the proposed clauses were withdrawn prior to the passage of Bill 160 as the *Education Quality Improvement Act*.

The College and the Teacher Federations

The creation of the College was opposed in varying degrees by the Ontario teacher federations. By legislation, Ontario teachers in publicly-funded school systems belong to the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF). As members of the OTF, they are then assigned to one of the Ontario teacher federation affiliates. Approximately 75 per cent of the members of the Ontario College of Teachers are also members of the Ontario Teachers' Federation. The teacher federations were opposed to a number of aspects of the legislation – particularly any expectation of mandatory professional learning and standards for teacher performance.

During the election process for the first Governing Council, the teacher federations endorsed a slate of 14 candidates for the 17 elected positions. Over 400 College members sought these

seventeen positions. All fourteen candidates endorsed by the Ontario Teachers' Federation were elected.

The teacher federations had been responsible for the discipline of their members. The investigative powers of the federations were limited, for example, they could not subpoena documents. The disciplinary panels could reprimand a member but could only request that the Minister of Education and Training revoke the license to teach. The College can not only subpoena documents, but can request a court order of "search and seizure". The College grants and revokes the license to teach. While disciplinary hearings held by the federations could be open to the public, the defendant normally requested that they be closed and reprimands were normally private. Hearings at the College are open to the public except where the identity of a student might be revealed. The decisions of College disciplinary panels are published.

The initial conflict that was perceived to exist between the College and the teacher federations has largely disappeared, as the roles of each are better understood as being complementary rather than competitive or adversarial. The primary role of the federations is to negotiate collective agreements with employers. The College has no role to play in this process and refuses to comment on negotiations and job action such as strikes and lockouts. The College sets standards for professional learning, registers program providers and accredits programs. Federations organize and deliver professional learning activities. The federations are responsible to their individual members. The College is responsible to the public and to the profession as a whole.

The federations have been largely opposed to the structure of Governing Council, arguing that, while 17 of the 31 councillors are elected by and from the membership of the College, only 14 are open to classroom teachers who are members of the federations. Three positions are designated for members of the College who are in a) a private/independent school, b) a school board administrative position, and c) a faculty of education. The position of the teacher federations is that the composition of Governing Council must have a majority of "classroom teachers". This balance, or perceived imbalance, has been exacerbated by the government's removal of principals and vice-principals from membership in the teacher federations. Recommendations will be made to the Governing Council regarding amendments to the composition of the Council to recognize principals and vice-principals as a represented group of members of the College. Yet, with the current structure debate has been both thoughtful and lively among the 17 elected and 14 government-appointed members of Council. The elected and appointed members have not voted as blocks. Elected and appointed members have worked together on committees, sub-committees, work teams and panels without prejudice.

The College and Faculties of Education

Ontario's ten faculties of education, as well, are beginning to shape a new relationship with the College. Teacher education programs in Ontario had not been reviewed by the Ministry of Education and Training since the mid 1980's. Faculties of education had for over ten years operated independently and with a broad range of interpretations of existing legislation. In the first year of its existence, the College made a review of pre-service teacher education programs a priority. The Standards of Practice and Education Unit and the Accreditation Unit worked closely with three faculties in a pilot project designed to establish an accreditation process for all

faculties of education. The process has been expanded to involve three additional faculties of education in this academic year and the remaining four faculties next year.

The three pilot sites received initial accreditation in June 1998. One of the faculties was granted "accreditation with conditions" status. The College will closely monitor the implementation of its recommendations in all three faculties.

The College and the Media

Education has been a major focus for media attention for a number of years now in Ontario. New curriculum releases, the creation of school councils, a ten-day teacher walkout in November 1997, the amalgamation of school boards, teacher strikes, work-to-rule and lockouts by school boards in September 1998, school closings due to fiscal restraint and other issues have served to keep education in the forefront. The College has issued media releases only on those issues specifically related to the College mandate. In general, the College position on the Bill 160 issue of placing unqualified teachers in classrooms was ignored or underreported by the Ontario media. This may have resulted from a lack of understanding regarding the role of the College and an inability on the part of the media to define its relationship with either the Government or the Ontario teacher federations.

The media has reported the decisions made by College disciplinary hearings with little fanfare. We hope that the publication of *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* in January 1999 will receive considerable media attention.

THE WORK OF THE COLLEGE

Executive Department

In addition to general administration, finance, human resources, reference library and communications, the Executive Department has a Policy and Research Unit that supports the work of Council in the development of regulations and procedural by-laws.

Regulations under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* are drafted and approved by Governing Council and forwarded to the Minister of Education and Training for approval and submission to Cabinet for approval and order of the Lieutenant Governor. To date, regulations have been made regarding electing members to the Council, filling vacancies on Council and committees, prescribing classes of certificates of qualification and registration, requiring employers of members to deduct fees from their salaries and submit the fees to the College, and professional misconduct. The regulation setting out teacher qualifications is now made under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* and will be revised in 1999.

Membership Services Department

There are 171,500 members of the Ontario College of Teachers. The Membership Services Department keeps their qualifications up to date and produces a new Certificate of Qualification annually. The department also maintains a public register and responds to questions from employers and from the public regarding the qualifications and status of members of the College.

About 4,000 new graduates of teacher training programs in Ontario faculties of education applied for membership in the College last year. This number will increase to almost 8,000 this year. More than 17,000 additional qualifications are added to individual members' records yearly. The call centre handles an average of 700 telephone calls every day. Over 65 daily visitors come to the walk-in centre. Almost 3,000 teachers qualified in other jurisdictions apply for and receive membership in the College every year. The Evaluation Services Unit examines the documentation provided by these candidates. The College is responsible for the archival records of 200,000 former teachers.

Investigations and Hearings Department

The Investigations and Hearings Department supports the work of the Investigation Committee, the Discipline Committee and the Fitness to Practise Committee. These committees of Governing Council are established by statute. The Investigation Committee investigates complaints of alleged professional misconduct, incompetence and incapacity. The mandate of the Discipline Committee is to hear and determine any allegation of professional misconduct or incompetence on the part of a College member. The Fitness to Practise Committee hears and determines allegations of incapacity.

Members of the College are employed by school boards and other institutions. The responsibility for supervision and evaluation resides with the employer. The College has no inspectorate function. Many complainants are encouraged to seek local resolution of their concerns since the supervisor or the employer of the member who is the subject of the

complaint is better placed to address their concern. About half of the complaints received by the College are resolved at the local level.

The disciplinary function of the College is modelled on that of other professional bodies. "The purpose of discipline is *not* to punish the errant professional but to protect patients from potentially harmful treatment." (Feld and Simm, 1995:15-16) About half of the complaints investigated by the College are settled through mediation. The aim of discipline is rehabilitation and remediation. Only in extreme cases is the license to practise revoked. The following chart is a summary of the complaints lodged with the College during its first seven months of operation. Since that time, although the total number may have increased, the nature of complaints has followed a somewhat similar pattern.

Nature of Complaint	Number	Percentage
Criminal charges or convictions	26	48.2
Inappropriate conduct: verbal	6	11.1
Inappropriate conduct: physical	4	7.4
Fitness to practise	5	9.3
Sexual impropriety: no criminal charges	4	7.4
Other	9	16.6
Total	**54**	**100.0**

Figure 2. Nature of Complaints, May - December 1997.

Professional Affairs Department

The Professional Affairs Department supports the work of the Standards of Practice and Education Committee and of the Accreditation Committee.

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Standards of Practice and Education

The Standards of Practice and Education Committee is engaged in fulfilling the College mandate to establish standards of practice for the teaching profession, ethical standards, and a professional learning framework to support the standards of practice and to promote continuing competence among members of the College.

A self-regulatory body must be able to articulate what it is that makes that professional body unique. In the case of the Ontario College of Teachers, it means answering the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" Professional self-regulatory bodies use the term "standards of practice" to refer to the descriptors that answer this question. For the teaching profession, this description includes statements about commitment to students and student learning, professional knowledge, teaching practice, leadership and community, and ongoing professional learning.

In the *College of Teachers Act* as well as the *Education Act* and other legislation including Regulations under these Acts, "teacher" means a member of the Ontario College of Teachers. This definition includes not only classroom teachers but also members in a broad range of roles such as principals, occasional teachers, superintendents and directors of education. In the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* the word "teacher" is used. All members of the College in their different roles and different workplaces should be able to see the work they do described in the standards of practice.

The Development of the Standards of Practice

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* document was developed using a variety of sources and resources. Existing statements from other educational jurisdictions were reviewed. This review included both national and international examples. Standards of practice statements from other self-regulatory bodies in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada were also examined.

Hundreds of members of the College and the public contributed through structured research activities to the development of the standards of practice. The structured research activities included interviews, focus groups, and written responses to questions posed on the College web-site and in College publications. In addition, many participants offered feedback through e-mail, discussion groups, writing teams and written correspondence.

A preliminary draft was reviewed by more than 600 members of the College and the public who engaged in developmental feedback sessions. Many groups and individuals also prepared written responses to this early draft. Data from the developmental feedback sessions and the issues brought forward in these responses provided the basis for the revision of the preliminary draft.

The standards of practice have been developed to answer the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" The responses contributed by participants in the development and revision processes were highly personalized, deeply reflective and complex. Participants spoke

passionately about the importance of teaching – for now and for a future we can not yet envision.

The College anticipates this interest in the refinement of the standards of practice statements will continue. The validation process for the present document provides for many more organizations and individuals to engage in the discussion.

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession, October 1998 The following five statements comprise the standards of practice for the teaching profession. Key elements have also been developed to expand on these statements.	
Commitment to Students and Student Learning	Teachers demonstrate care for and commitment to students. They are dedicated to engaging and supporting student learning. Teachers treat students equitably and with respect. They encourage students to grow as individuals and as contributing members of society. Teachers assist students to become life-long learners.
Professional Knowledge	Professional knowledge is the foundation for teaching practice. Teachers know the curriculum, the subject matter, the student, and teaching practice. They know education-related legislation, methods for communication, and ways to teach in a changing world.
Teaching Practice	Teachers apply professional knowledge and understanding of the student, curriculum, teaching and the changing context of the learning environment to promote student learning. They conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation of student progress. Teachers modify and refine teaching practice through continuous reflection.
Leadership and Community	Teachers are educational leaders who create and sustain learning communities in their classrooms, in their schools, and in their profession. They collaborate with their colleagues and other professionals, with parents, and with other members of the community to enhance school programs and student learning.
Ongoing Professional Learning	Teachers are learners who acknowledge the interdependence of teacher learning and student learning. Teachers engage in a continuum of professional growth to improve their practice.

Figure 3. The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession.

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The standards of practice are descriptors for the teaching profession. They will also serve as a catalyst for discussion, debate and movement toward a consensus about what it means to be a teacher.

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provides the foundation for pre-service and in-service programs accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers.

Ethical Standards

Equally important in defining the profession is the articulation of the ethical foundation of the practice of teaching. Ethical standards are being developed to provide an explicit public statement of professional expectations of members of the College in their relationships to learners, to colleagues, to employers, to parents, to the public, and to the profession itself.

To date, the development of the ethical standards has involved a review of national, international examples from education and other professions, legislation governing the teaching profession and the by-laws of teacher federations. Members of the College and the public will contribute to the development through a consultation process under development. The purpose of the consultation process is to obtain valuable feedback to help shape the ethical standards for the profession and also to encourage reflection and dialogue about ethical issues. This dialogue will further develop the understanding of the commitment teachers make to uphold ethical standards and standards of practice of the profession.

The Professional Learning Framework

Professional learning is at the core of teacher professionalism. The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provides the foundation for ongoing professional learning. By linking professional standards and professional learning, a long-term agenda for learning emerges. The professional learning framework will promote the recognition of teachers as self-directed learners who are involved in meaningful professional learning activities that are integrated into daily practice and benefit student learning.

While there has been a constant level of activity on the part of teachers in the area of lifelong learning, this activity has taken place for the most part without a framework or integrated context. There has been no central point from which a career-long vision of ongoing learning for all members of the teaching profession has been envisioned or organized. The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provides this focus.

The framework will include professional learning opportunities that are varied, flexible and accessible in order to meet the different needs of members. It will recognize the multiplicity of learning needs and activities, acknowledging both formal and informal learning as well as career and life changes.

The professional learning framework will help guide members' reflection on key learning events in their careers. The purpose of the professional learning framework is to provide a context of priority and coherence within which teachers individually may establish their own

professional learning plans and collectively ensure that standards for the teaching profession are supported.

Accreditation

The mandate of the Accreditation Committee is to develop processes for the accreditation of all Ontario teacher education programs and for the registration of program providers. This includes both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. The accreditation of teacher education programs by the College will ensure:

- quality and consistency in the academic preparation of teachers;
- that the programs reflect changes in professional knowledge and practice;
- that members of the profession participate in setting the requirements of the profession;
- public accountability; and
- that programs reflect the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

The Accreditation Committee uses the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* to develop a set of indicators that demonstrate that the program to be accredited supports and enhances the standards of practice. In this way, the College fulfils its mandate to "enforce" standards for the profession.

In the first year, three of the ten faculties of education at Ontario universities received "initial accreditation". Three faculties, one of which has a French-language as well as an English-language program, are involved in the accreditation process this year. "Initial accreditation" is for a three-year period. The process of initial accreditation is evolving. Faculties are participating in the developmental process. In 2000-2001, the first group of faculties will be part

of an accreditation process that may grant accredited status for a period of five years. The Accreditation Committee recognizes three awards: accreditation granted, accreditation granted with conditions, accreditation not granted. When accreditation is granted with conditions, time-lines and reporting conditions will be imposed.

A work group of the Accreditation Committee is currently developing criteria and procedures for the registration of program providers and the accreditation of programs of ongoing professional learning. In time, the College may accredit action research, conferences and workshops as well as traditional additional qualifications courses.

NEW PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING

How fares the Ontario College of Teachers?

> An occupation becomes a profession when it assumes responsibility for developing a shared knowledge base for all of its members and for transmitting that knowledge through professional education, licensing, and ongoing peer review.
>
> (Darling-Hammond, 1997)

The Ontario College of Teachers was given the mandate, through legislation, to establish standards for the practice of the profession and to provide for the ongoing professional learning of members of the College. (*Ontario College of Teachers Act*, 1996: Section 3) The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provides the basis for all accredited programs of professional

education. In this way, the teaching profession assumes the responsibility for the education and licensing of its members. The College does not conduct peer review. However, the legislation does provide for the possibility of the College prescribing ongoing education requirements for its members. (*Ibid.*, Section 40 (24))

Does the establishment of structures similar to those in place for lawyers, for doctors, dentists and other health care professionals, liken the status of teachers to that of these other "professions"?

The Bill 160 debate confirmed the legal authority of the Ontario College of Teachers to set the criteria for teaching in the publicly-funded schools of the province. Now, like the other self-regulating professions, the College establishes the qualifications for membership in the profession.

Issues related to public accountability have disconcerted many members of the College. The disciplinary hearings are open to the public and the decisions of disciplinary panels are published. This was not the case in the past. The public now has access to the register of members'qualifications and status. However, the question most frequently asked by members is simply, *is this what the other professions do?* There is a general acceptance that if this is what the doctors and lawyers and dentists do, then it is the right thing to do. Many teachers who never doubted their personal and collective professionalism recognize that the College, even with public airing of disciplinary issues, has put the profession on an equal footing with other recognized professions.

Can a body established for the purposes of public accountability heighten the professionalism of its members?

The words "profession" and "professional" are used in a great many contexts. While "profession" was once a synonym of "calling" or "vocation", synonyms now include "occupation" and "employment". If "professional" has come to mean nothing more than being paid for what you do, then how can the traditional or "learned" professions maintain their identity as something distinct from other kinds of employment? The learned professions, medicine, law and theology, or in more modern times, medicine, law and teaching, all serve the public. Often called vocations or callings, practitioners were long considered to exercise their profession in the spirit of service without concern for remuneration.

Service to the public brings accountability to the public. The public expects the government to license certain trades such as plumbers and electricians in the public interest. Membership in professional associations such as those for engineers and accountants assures the consumer or client that the practitioner is qualified and accountable. The licensing body, whether government or professional association, safeguards the public interest.

The creation of the Ontario College of Teachers passed the responsibility for licensing practitioners from the government to a professional body. The professional body is publicly accountable just as are other licensing bodies. This means that individual teachers are accountable to the profession through the professional body, and that the profession itself, as

was the Ministry of Education and Training when it licensed teachers, is accountable to the public.

Public accountability may be precisely what distinguishes a profession from employment that requires accountability only to the employer. In this case, highlighting the public accountability of the teaching profession has indeed enhanced the status of teaching. The transfer of licensing authority from government authority to a self-regulating professional body recognizes the profession as responsible and accountable. Public accountability may indeed be the cornerstone of professionalism.

One can then argue that the creation of a body established for the purposes of public accountability does heighten the professionalism of its members by virtue of their membership in such a body.

Is "professional" a status that can be bestowed by legislation?

"Professional" as a "legal standing which determines one's rights and duties" (Oxford, 1995) is surely a status bestowed by legislation and defined by the courts. Society will determine social status using a wide variety of ever-changing criteria. Assumed status comes from a sense of self that, while informed by legal and social judgement, is indifferent to ranking and relativity. Most members of the teaching profession have long assumed professional status.

Schools, education and learning are highly valued by society. Why is it then that so often teaching as a career, or even as a "profession", is less valued? The word "professional" means too many different things today to be a much sought-after status of itself. Only in context will the word have a clear meaning. The teaching profession will have the status it assumes, the status that comes from the ability to define itself, to answer the question "What does it mean to be a teacher" and to enforce that meaning in the governance of the profession.

Has the creation of the College enhanced the professionalism of teachers?

Professionalism as a legal status has been established by the creation of the Ontario College of Teachers. The media reports of disciplinary hearings and the revocation of the license to teach have portrayed the College as the professional body of the teaching profession. The general public, however, remains unaware of the existence or the significance of the College. Individual members look to the College to be active in promoting the professionalism of members of the College with the public as well as among the membership. The professionalism of teachers has indeed been and will continue to be enhanced through the work of the Ontario College of Teachers.

CONCLUSION

The *privilege* of professionalism?

A self-regulating body with teeth that has a majority of elected members (but including wider community representation), is best placed to set, maintain and

> constantly look for ways to raise its own collective standards of practice, rather than having other people's standards imposed on its members. Such a body would act as a powerful and independent pressure group on government to create policies that promote the high standards of practice and professional learning which teachers will have set themselves. It would give teachers the privilege and responsibility of establishing their own collective professionalism, so they are the vanguard rather than victims of educational reform.
>
> (Hargreaves, 1998:35)

In reflecting on the idea of "privilege", one of the program officers of the Standards of Practice and Education Unit reported:

> *I conducted a developmental feedback session on the first draft of the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession document with a group of secondary school students at a leadership training centre in July 1998. One of the students suggested that teachers have to realize that teaching them is not a duty, it is a "privilege". Looking back on my own career, on many occasions, I felt truly privileged to have met and learned with and from some very special students. When a colleague suggested that an academic prize-winner was lucky to have had me as a teacher, I was overcome by the feeling that it was I who had been the lucky one. It has been a personal privilege to have enjoyed the trust of so many students and their parents who expected so much and had the confidence that I would measure up to the task simply because I was the "teacher".*

Students, their parents and the public entrust their future to teachers. This trust constitutes the privilege of being a teacher. The provincial legislature has acknowledged the trust of the people

of Ontario in the teaching profession by creating the Ontario College of Teachers as a self-regulatory body to govern the profession – a privilege that values and demands the professionalism of teachers.

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